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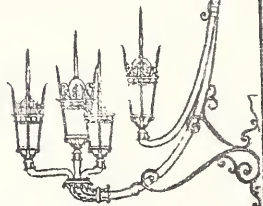
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LAND USE CHANGES IN THE 1960'S

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Research Report
Federal Reserve Bank
of Boston

1970 Projection No. 10

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LAND USE CHANGES IN THE 1960'S

Summary and Conclusion

Changes in the mode of living and in the technology of farming, transportation, and manufacturing have occurred at a rapid rate in recent years, and are expected to continue to do so in the 1960's. These changes will lead to radical adjustment in land use patterns in New England.

Many of the changes will be obvious. For example, an inner belt expressway will be pushed through a series of congested, residential districts near the center of Boston; another one will ring the Hartford metropolitan area. Still another expressway will penetrate into the wilds of northern Maine. New factories will be located adjoining these expressways--especially at major intersections on the fringes of metropolitan areas. Urban renewal work will become much more obvious as the results of preliminary planning and community planning and community decision making during the past decade comes to fruition.

Other changes will be more subtle or the results will not be so immediately obvious. Most communities will spend much more time and money on planning and zoning. Communities will vie with one another to attract the "desirable" industries and commercial establishments and the high income families. There will be increasing competition among communities to zone out the inexpensive house which requires more in the way of government services than it brings in tax revenue.

Many of the low income communities and central cities saddled with expensive government services that are really costs of the entire metropolitan area will have to seek financial aid from the state and Federal governments. Many communities will be aggressive in seeking new industries. The financial plight of small tightly built-up residential and commercial communities on the inner ring of the larger metropolitan areas will become especially serious during the 1960's.

Out in the country more and more farms will be abandoned. The lands and buildings will be taken over by the more prosperous farmers and by commuters, by summer residents, and by heirs who like to maintain the family homestead for sentimental reasons. Much rural land in the southern half of New England will increase in value as it is sought for second homes and as a retreat from the pressures of life in the city. This trend will push up the capital value of many farms and much forest land in southern New England. Increased prices of land may prevent or discourage the progress of agriculture and forestry in southern New England. But the satisfactions obtained from rural living also meet essential human needs.

Intensive Farming

Although the total production of New England's farms increases every year, the land requirements of New England agriculture continue to decline. Table I clearly demonstrates that total acreage in agriculture has declined but acreage per farm has increased in the postwar period.

Table I
Farmland in New England

1945, 1950, 1954

(in acres)

	Total Acreage in Farms			Average Acreage Per Farm		
	1954	1950	1945	1954	1950	1945
Maine	3,614,242	4,181,613	4,613,175	154.7	137.7	109.4
N.H.	1,457,293	1,713,731	2,017,049	140.0	128.0	107.4
Vermont	3,317,737	3,527,381	3,930,514	207.6	185.2	148.4
Mass.	1,439,080	1,660,389	2,078,349	82.9	74.7	56.2
R.I.	154,674	191,052	264,734	77.2	73.5	73.5
Conn.	<u>1,137,894</u>	<u>1,272,352</u>	<u>1,593,169</u>	<u>89.2</u>	<u>81.5</u>	<u>71.6</u>
N.E.	11,120,920	12,546,518	14,496,990	135.8	121.5	96.4

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1945, 1950, 1954.

What is perhaps most interesting is that harvested cropland has dropped by 37 percent since 1944.

Table II
Harvested Cropland in New England

(in acres)

	1954	1949	1944
Maine	795,710	932,028	1,315,562
N.H.	246,583	290,199	435,748
Vermont	799,145	858,512	1,159,888
Mass.	331,180	376,036	580,608
R.I.	34,980	39,782	61,725
Conn.	<u>285,886</u>	<u>308,500</u>	<u>433,339</u>
N.E.	2,493,484	2,805,057	3,986,870

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.

On the other hand, the total value of farmland and buildings and total farm marketings has gone up. However, these dollar figures have not been adjusted for changes in price level since 1944. Hence, over-all values have actually remained quite constant.

Table III
Value of Farms (Land & Buildings) in New England

(in dollars)

	1954	1950	1945
Maine	\$219,464,000	\$226,518,000	\$159,680,897
N.H.	124,820,000	124,845,000	80,394,869
Vermont	202,356,000	196,405,000	134,575,897
Mass.	322,077,000	314,710,000	265,232,462
R.I.	53,056,000	44,328,000	35,609,900
Conn.	<u>331,211,000</u>	<u>315,251,000</u>	<u>263,023,415</u>
N.E.	\$1,252,984,000	\$1,222,057,000	\$938,517,440

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.

Table IVValue of Farm Products Sold in New England

(in dollars)

	Value			Average per Farm		
	1954	1949	1944	1954	1949	1944
Maine	\$139,541,249	\$125,514,901	\$ 96,396,840	\$5,971	\$4,134	\$2,285
N.H.	45,338,141	46,499,909	39,154,354	4,355	3,472	2,084
Vermont	86,446,310	86,988,103	70,258,645	5,409	4,568	2,652
Mass.	125,225,758	135,349,945	114,838,916	7,213	6,091	3,103
R.I.	15,317,118	16,084,379	14,803,501	7,643	6,191	4,109
Conn.	<u>123,308,808</u>	<u>121,268,761</u>	<u>89,185,727</u>	<u>9,669</u>	<u>7,766</u>	<u>4,010</u>
N.E.	\$535,177,384	\$531,705,998	424,637,983	\$6,536	\$5,151	\$2,825

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.

In addition the per acre capital value of farms has gone up steadily.

Table VValue of Farms (Land & Buildings) in New England

Average Per Acre Value (in dollars)

	1954	1950	1945
Maine	\$ 60.72	\$54.17	\$34.61
N.H.	85.65	72.85	39.86
Vermont	60.99	55.68	34.24
Mass.	223.81	189.54	127.62
R.I.	343.02	232.02	134.51
Conn.	<u>291.07</u>	<u>247.77</u>	<u>165.09</u>
N.E.	\$112.67	\$ 97.40	\$ 64.74

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.

It is apparent that farmers are practicing a much more intensive type of agriculture than they were only a decade ago. As a result much

farmland is being taken over by commuters, part-time farmers, summer residents, state forests, municipal watersheds, summer camps, sportsmen's groups and heirs who continue to maintain the family homestead for sentimental reasons.

In northern New England much forest land has been purchased by pulp and paper companies, but in southern New England the new owners are likely to be city folk who know very little about farm or forest management.

For example, 80 percent of the forest land in southern New England is in private ownerships of less than 500 acres. The Harvard Forest and the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, in a cooperative study made several years ago, found that the typical small woodlot owner was not a farmer, forester, or other person with some knowledge of the woods. Rather, he was a business or professional person, a housewife, clerk, or laborer. Most of these people hold forest land for a variety of reasons and financial gain is frequently rather unimportant. Many view their land as a retreat, or they obtain some kind of sentimental satisfaction from merely owning it and being able to go out and enjoy it on weekends. In a number of cases, the owners are actually hostile to forest management because they fear the aesthetic values of their woodlot will be destroyed if they permit any type of cutting.

For over 200 years, the better trees and better species have been cut out of the forests of New England. Species such as white pine have been most heavily cut and the natural old field succession has converted large areas of softwood forests to hardwoods. In addition the best formed hardwoods have been removed from many timber stands leaving the residual timber dominated by defective trees and coarse sprouts. As a result of all these factors, the forests of southern New England contain a large surplus of small, currently unmerchantable hardwood trees.

It is entirely possible that during the next decade one or possibly two new plants that can utilize this material will locate in southern New England to use this surplus wood, provided the problems of converting trees into wood at the mill can be solved. (Southern New England has sufficient quantities of wood and process water to support six to eight large integrated pulp and paper companies.)

When, and if, this hardwood bulk use expansion occurs, the typical small forest owner will face a difficult decision. He will be able to sell off all his growing stock for hardwood fiber and obtain one lump sum payment or he can decide to keep some of the potentially more valuable trees in order to obtain a larger return in later years from higher grade products. In many cases, the decision will not be an easy one because much of the existing growing stock is almost worthless for any use other than firewood or pulpwood. Furthermore, many landowners do not have the labor, capital, or management skill to follow more intensive management.

There is also the very real danger that many small woodlot owners may decide that the small returns from pulpwood do not justify the trouble and unsightly results. In that case, the forests might suffer from overprotection rather than overcutting.

In either event, the forest product industries and the region itself would lose. New firms would not move in. Old ones might be forced to close down. Thus, the independent decisions of thousands of small forest owners can have a significant impact on the regional economy. This is the reason so many public officials are concerned about small woodlot management.

The Place for Multi-Purpose
Management on Rural Land

There is a tendency for each generation to idealize the past--to look at history through rose-colored glasses and at the same time to view with alarm current trends. At the risk of being charged with this failing, it should be pointed out that in Colonial New England farmers generally practiced a fairly good type of multi-purpose management on their forest and farmlands.

Granted that the forests were generally heavily cut but the woods not only provided a setting for the rural towns they also provided firewood for fuel, lumber for building, and charcoal for various industrial purposes. Colonial agriculture opened up an ideal type of game cover and game food. And in almost all parts of New England hunters and fishermen were granted free access to all private land. Very few restrictions were placed upon sportsmen regardless of their income or position in life.

During the last few decades more and more rural land in New England has been taken over by persons and organizations primarily interested in only one of the productive capabilities of rural land. For example, pulp and paper companies are primarily interested in growing wood fiber. Even though the public (for public relation reasons) is almost always granted access to company owned lands in New England, conflicts of interest are common and are inevitable. Conflicts between the sportsmen and small landowners are much more common. In Massachusetts, for example, about 27 percent of the rural land is posted with no trespassing signs.^{1/}

Similarly land managed by municipal watershed departments is typically cut off entirely from public use. A 1957 study by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health showed that no recreation of any sort is permitted

^{1/} Joseph Larson, Study of Posting on Private Land in Massachusetts. Unpublished master's thesis in wildlife management, University of Massachusetts, May 1958.

on the land surrounding 132 of 186 public reservoirs in the state of Massachusetts.^{2/} Thus no boating, skating, hunting or fishing is permitted. In the remaining 54 reservoirs one or more of these activities is generally permitted but under very restricted circumstance. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health study did not find out how many water supply departments permitted logging on watershed lands, but in many instances no cutting is allowed.

As mentioned in the previous section, many woodlot owners have little interest in wood production but are more concerned about the aesthetics of the rural landscape. A survey of land ownership of sportsmen's groups made in 1958 by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston showed that only 17 percent of those owning land permitted logging operations on their land. Admittedly, many of the 56,000 acres owned by the reporting sportsmen's groups are in parcels which are too small to justify a commercial logging operation. But only 34 percent of the sportsmen's groups owning more than 100 acres of land permitted logging. A similar study conducted in 1959 by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston of the management objectives of summer camps (both private and agency) revealed that only 184 of the 718 reporting camps allowed logging operations and only about one-third made any effort to increase the wildlife population on their land.

Most recently there has been a concerted effort by many sincere conservationists in New England and throughout the country to set aside large areas of forest land in "wilderness preserves." No hunting, trail building, logging, or permanent summer camps are allowed on such lands. Such areas offer the ambitious and rugged hiker or nature lover an exclusive

^{2/} Special Report of the Department of Public Health Relative to the Preservation of the Purity of Certain Water Supplies within the Commonwealth, Senate #665, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1957.

retreat from all forms of human activity. Although a few such retreats are certainly justified, they are very expensive public investments which benefit a very few as compared to national forests where water supplies are preserved and where hunting and logging as well as all types of public recreation are permitted.

The Future of Rural Land Management

Land Ownership by Farmers

The Census of Agriculture data shown in the first section of this paper showed a decided decline in the acreage of farms between 1945 and 1954. Most authorities agree that acreage in farms has continued to decline since 1954 and will continue to decline through 1970 even though agricultural production may continue to increase. By 1970 it is likely that less than 20 percent of the land area in New England will be owned by farmers. This compares with 27.5 percent in 1954 and 35.9 percent in 1945. The trend toward more intensive agriculture with smaller areas of pasture and cropland and less need for forest land makes this trend more or less inevitable.

Forest Land

About 78 percent of the land area in New England is supporting forest growth. About 30,658,000 acres or 76 percent of the total land area is commercially useful forest land. Of this acreage, 6,138,000 or 20 percent is owned by farmers, and 8,178,000 or 27 percent is owned by woodusing industries. By 1970 farmers will probably own less than 15 percent of the commercial forest land, and woodusing industry almost 30 percent. At the present time, 14,601,000 acres or 48 percent are owned by other private land owners. This group will continue to expand its holdings and will probably control better than half of the forest land in New England by 1970.

The Great Problem

The great problem of the future will be how to encourage woodusing industries, farmers and the assorted miscellaneous landowners to consider all the productive values of their land. At the present time many rural landowners are not seriously concerned about forestry or wildlife values. If present trends continue, this could seriously jeopardize the future of fishing and hunting and the woodusing industries in this area.

A Place for Single Purpose Management

By hard experience highway engineers have learned that highway planning is unsatisfactory if it does not consider the possible uses of adjoining land. In the past, highways have been considered to be multipurpose public utilities. They conveyed traffic between two centers of population, served as a point of intersection for all connecting roads, and at the same time served as an access road to houses, commercial establishments, and industries that chose to locate on that highway.

During the thirties and even after World War II through highways were built with almost no control of access. Gasoline stations, motels, drive-ins, and all types of wayside stores and service institutions sprang up on the roadsides. Worse of all, strip residential development was permitted. Miles and miles of valuable, high-speed highways were lined with houses--each with its own driveway--simply because the cost of utilities and access was cheaper along the highway than in a new subdivision.

This chaotic development permanently destroyed much of the carrying capacity of major prewar highways. The resulting traffic conditions have strangled economic growth in many metropolitan areas. State and metropolitan highway engineers have been forced not only to meet rapidly increasing highway needs but also to replace older highways irreparably damaged by this real estate development.

After a section of road has been turned into a succession of intersections by roadside development, it is difficult to perform a salvage operation. In some cases, the real estate on one side of the road can be condemned to make way for a new limited access highway. The old road becomes a service road for property on the other side. Such action is tentatively planned on large sections of Route 2 in Massachusetts between West Concord and Boston. On Route 1 in Connecticut, near New London, the state owns a right-of-way large enough to permit it to construct frontage roads to serve existing properties on both sides. These roads will provide access to the nearest interchange, and the old highway will be converted into an expressway. These examples are exceptional. As a general rule, little can be done for densely built-up highways and turnpikes except curtail the number of crossings through the median strip.

The outlook is somewhat more hopeful on existing highways with sparse development. Communities can require that property adjoining a highway be subdivided so that new housing has access to an interior local street rather than the throughway. Or, they can make sure that land along the roadside is not strip zoned for commercial or residential development. In one case a state has taken action. Massachusetts restricted land uses along a northern section of Route 128 before any development took place, although the section had not been built with limited access.

In some cases highway departments find that they can condemn scattered developments along a through highway at a reasonable cost. The Massachusetts Department of Public Works is planning such a program on existing Route 15, which connects the Massachusetts Turnpike below Worcester to the state of Connecticut.

All in all, however, the history of attempts to salvage the old highways has not been encouraging. Individual towns and cities competing for new taxable property are reluctant to zone out commerce or industry along

state highways, and local planning boards are under constant pressure to relax their standards. State highway departments do not wish to spend too much time and money on highways which cannot be brought up to standards high enough to qualify for Federal interstate highway funds. As a result, all the new highways shown on the highway projection map will be constructed on new locations and access will be completely controlled.

But the fact that all expressways will be built with limited access does not mean that the highways will not be accessible to people, business, and industry. In most areas they will open up huge tracts of land for industrial and commercial development particularly at interchanges outside of large metropolitan areas. The only fear of many responsible officials is that highways and interchanges will not be located so as to open up the best possible industrial sites. They also fear that, once the expressways are built, local officials may not protect prime sites by appropriate zoning and construction of local access roads.

In 1958 the Connecticut Legislature passed a resolution requesting the State Highway Commission to consult with planners in the Connecticut Development Commission to consider the industrial development potential of a new highway in preliminary planning. Earlier, this legislature had recognized the industrial importance of highways when it required that the Connecticut Turnpike be built into northeastern Connecticut even though traffic flows in the area did not justify this construction. This area, which includes such communities as Putnam, Danielson, and Jewett City, has long suffered from a loss in textile employment. The hope is that the recently completed turnpike and the proposed Route 12 going north to the Massachusetts line will turn the economic tide in the area. Early indications are that they will help.

Industrial planners are also working successfully with highway engineers in other areas. In Providence, plans for an expressway running through the West River Urban Renewal area were adjusted to avoid splitting this desirable industrial park. The proposed location of the outer circumferential highway (Route 110) near Haverhill has been moved outward so as to protect and develop industrial land.

The concept of limited access on expressways may, in some cases, be pushed too far. One Federal requirements for a new interstate highway is that there be no commercial development on the right-of-way. This includes gasoline stations and restaurants which traditionally have been located in designated service areas along toll roads and expressways. As a result, through traffic will be forced to leave these expressways at interchanges to obtain these services and then move across two-way traffic on the connecting road to return. Many authorities are convinced that the traffic congestion and accident rate on the uncontrolled connecting roads near interchanges will become a serious problem.

One partial solution would be to permit service areas on the interstate highway system. But even so, the interchanges which are the all important valves on the highway system are bound to become clogged unless the affected towns pass subdivision and zoning regulations before the expressways are completed. Many planners believe that development running along the highway should be avoided at all costs and that industrial parks, shopping centers, overnight lodging, and restaurant centers, as well as automobile service centers should be located off the main connecting roads. However, unless the affected communities act along these lines soon, they will be too late.

Land Use in the Urban Areas

Two major factors account for the rapidly increasing demand of all city and town planners in the postwar decade. First, the Federal government

has sponsored a generous urban renewal program which provides eligible communities with a capital grant of two-thirds of the net cost involved in assembling land and preparing the site in a redevelopment project. The nature of this work requires the experience and technical know-how of a community planner. Furthermore, the Federal government has required that individual communities prepare or be in the process of preparing over-all community master plans before they become eligible for capital grants. This has forced many communities to hire planners or planning consultants.

The more important reason for the increasing popularity of planners is the distressing financial problems many communities have faced in the postwar decade. Central cities have suffered from a declining tax base as industries, stores, and people--especially the more prosperous and civic-minded people--moved to the suburbs. Many of the small communities--on the fringe of the metropolitan areas--(especially those which have been developed rapidly with relatively inexpensive homes) have suffered almost as much. The professional planner has offered a partial solution to both types of communities. He has told them that with proper "land use controls" their financial positions can be improved. What is required is an over-all master plan and a plan for the orderly development of the remaining undeveloped land in the city. Most planners believe in planning for many reasons and very few, if any of them are devoting their life to planning simply because they wish to lower the tax burdens of their client communities. Nevertheless, when they are selling their services to a group of hard boiled selectmen or city councilors, almost all planners have had to emphasize how they can help alleviate the communities' financial problems.

How does the planner do this? In the undeveloped suburban communities the planner recommends strict "land use" controls. He argues that most houses should pay their own way in property taxes or they should not be

allowed to be built. Most courts forbid zoning for houses on a minimum square footage or minimum cost basis. However, for health and welfare reasons they have permitted towns to specify minimum lot requirements, minimum frontages, set backs etc. Increasing these minimum requirements raises the minimum capital cost of a house and it becomes more and more likely that a developer will build a \$20, \$30 or \$40 thousand house rather than a \$12 or \$15 thousand ranch. This is particularly likely if the minimum lot sizes are one or two acres.

In most communities past development and political opposition force the planners to accept something less than complete control over future house building. Past development sometimes makes extremely strict land use controls look ridiculous. Furthermore, some low-income communities simply cannot attract prestige house builders. The result is that no houses are built. In these cases the planners push for commercial or industrial development as a way of building up the tax base. It is no accident that the lower income communities are generally those that are competing the hardest for shopping centers and industries. The higher income communities with the more expensive homes can avoid the problem of trying to make industrial and commercial zoning compatible with a dignified suburban atmosphere.

The planners working in the built-up cities or fringe residential communities have faced the most difficult type of consulting job. There, control of development has less meaning because little new development is possible. What must be done, therefore, is to tear down the old buildings bringing in little or no tax revenue and replace them with valuable taxable property. The Federal government's urban renewal program is well-suited for this process. This is one of the principal reasons that urban renewal has become so popular in recent years.

Recently, Professor Robert Wood has written a lively description of the

competition among communities for taxable property.^{3/} Professor Wood's publication and the trends described in this paper suggest the same question. What are the results of this type of competitive zoning for tax base? Can all communities solve their problems in this manner?

The answer is obviously no. But the consequences of competitive zoning to maintain a large tax base are probably not as bad as many persons have previously thought. First of all, incomes are rising and are expected to continue to rise during the 1960's. With rising incomes people will demand better housing and will gradually abandon the less expensive housing. Thus, if we are to plan for the future it makes more sense to overbuild rather than underbuild. In addition, it is probably a fair statement that most communities would never have the benefit of planning of any sort if planning had not been sweetened up with some type of financial reward. Furthermore, the need for taxable properties has induced many communities to seek industry rather than exclude them. In this way, the competition among communities encourages industrial development. Finally, strict land use controls are maintaining many green spaces on the fringes of communities. Many of these areas can be converted to parks and other community land in future years. Thus, zoning controls grant each suburban community more time to become aware of its need for greenbelts to interrupt the continuous urban sprawl and to help build up in each town a sense of being a community set apart from the numerous other similar towns in the same area.

The danger of competitive zoning is that it will go too far. Zoning carried to an extreme is a type of economic featherbedding. When people are forced to buy an acre lot when all they want is one-half an acre, when developers are forced to install curbstones when they serve almost no

^{3/} Metropolis Against Itself. Supplementary paper of the Committee for Economic Development, March 1959.

useful function, or when builders are forced to install drainage or sewage systems to unnecessarily high standards, the results are unnecessarily higher cost homes. In addition, competitive zoning simply cannot help many very low-income communities as well as communities that are already built up. As the communities decline they will appeal to the state legislature for financial aid. The next decade will see increasing conflict in the political area between the communities with the larger tax base and the have nots. Obviously any reduction of the present heavy dependence on the local property tax in most New England states and the collection of taxes on a state basis would lessen competition for taxable property.

To some slight extent the Federal urban renewal program will alleviate the financial plight of the built-up cities and towns and the next decade will see a lot more physical progress than has been revealed during the last 10 years. Since 1946 the cities in New England have been agitating for Federal help, have set up the redevelopment authorities and have received substantial reservations of funds. Nevertheless, to date only \$70 million of the \$172 million allocated to the region has been spent. Much of the preliminary work has been done in 48 communities. From now on we will see physical evidence of progress in these areas.

Nevertheless, the total amount of money already allocated to the region is almost insignificant compared to the total need of some of the have not communities. The financial crisis faced by communities such as Boston and Somerville will continue to make big headlines throughout the 1960's.

But despite the financial plight of many metropolitan communities an increasingly large proportion of New England's population will be living in metropolitan areas during the coming decade. In 1950, 76.2 percent of New England's population lived in urban communities^{4/} and 57.5 percent of the

^{4/} Incorporated towns with a population of 2,500 or more and selected other communities meeting other criteria. See Census of Population, 1950, Vol. 1, Page XV.

population lived in urbanized ^{5/} areas. Table VI shows that New England is the second most "urban" region in the country.

Table VI

Proportion of Urban Population

Region	Percent Population in Urban Areas	Percent Population in Urbanized Areas
New England	76.2	57.5
Middle Atlantic	80.5	69.1
E. N. Central	69.7	51.4
W. N. Central	52.0	31.2
South Atlantic	49.1	30.3
E. S. Atlantic	39.1	21.3
W. S. Atlantic	55.6	30.6
Mountain	54.9	20.0
Pacific	75.0	60.0

By 1970 80 percent of New England's population may live in urban places and 65 percent in urbanized areas. This trend towards the city will cause additional rural land to be swallowed up by urban sprawl. The Agriculture Department has estimated that as of 1953, 3,340,000 acres of land in New England was used for urban uses or for roads, powerlines or farmsteads. It was also estimated that a net addition of 15,000 acres are being added to this category each year. On this basis about 3,600,000 acres of land will be in urban and related uses in 1970.

^{5/} An urbanized area is one that includes a city with at least 50,000 inhabitants and the surrounding densely populated communities. For a detailed definition see 1950 Census of Population, Vol. 1, Page XXVII.

